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Play Reviews

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A Card Play is a delightful caper about three honest cards trying to prevent the Queen of Spades and the Knave of Hearts, and their cohorts, from stealing all the prize trophies. One of our heroes has trouble using correct words, and the Queen of Hearts gets involved with her famous tarts. All this leads to a show of fun-filled antics. The show is clever, fast-paced and very well written. Although there is no social underlying theme, the play does reward honesty and punish the villains for their theft. It would work as a touring show as sets and costumes are simple. Prepare to have fun time and a lot of laughs if you see this show.

—Gayanne Ramsden

Seven Ages of Anne is a series of vignettes in two acts. It portrays the life of Anne Jessamy Lawrence from the age of twelve to the age of eighty-seven. Different actresses take the part of Anne at her various ages from before World War I until the present. Anne marries, has a child, and, as an older woman, returns to school to become a doctor. However, the story is not primarily about Anne’s struggle to become a doctor but rather her relationships with family and friends and her inter-relationship with herself.

This is a poignant story that would perform well for junior and senior high school. It is an all-girl cast and would also do well as a class project. It does not require much in the way of sets, but the script calls for parts of the play to be videoed. The video portion, however, could be done very effectively with a voice over and would simplify the production. The play does not follow dramatic structure but it is a reflective piece that would be worth performing.

—Gayanne Ramsden

*A Connecticut Yankee* is a musical version of Mark Twain’s classic. The story begins at a high school play rehearsal when a boy named Hank Morgan is hit on the head, and when he awakens to find himself in King Arthur’s court, with Gwenivere, knights, and the magician Merlin. Hank, a boy from Connecticut, sets about improving and modernizing Arthur’s kingdom. He is thwarted by Merlin, who in this story is the villain, aiding the evil witch Morgan Le Fey.

We are never quite sure if Hank dreamed that he went to Camelot or if it really happens. The plot is also unsatisfactory, in the end, because Merlin seems to outwit Hank. In the closing scene of the play, we are back in the modern-day school room and are not sure how we got there. In addition to these difficulties with the plot, the score is somewhat dated and lacks a modern composition that students would enjoy.

In adapting the story from Mark Twain, Kelly used a contemporary setting with modernized language. Originally, it was written in Mark Twain’s colloquial speech. The songs do move the plot forward, although the lyrics are not very original. On the whole I do not think Kelly does justice to Mark Twain’s classic.

—Gayanne Ramsden

Kelly, Tim. *Snow White*.  

This rendition of the Grimms’ fairytale is very close to the story of the young princess who is fairer than her evil stepmother; however, there have been a couple of animals added to the story that younger children would enjoy. There is an enchanted fox and a cat with the fox helping to move the plot forward and the cat’s role seeming to be extraneous. Among some other innovating changes in the story is a moving mirror, and when the queen turns into a peddler and a crone, lights flash and completely different actresses take her place. This makes the story seem more magical. There is a different ending from the violent Grimm’s finale with the queen dancing in hot iron shoes until she dies. In this play, when the queen becomes a crone, she is unable to change back into her beautiful self and must live alone—hiding her ugliness from the world.

The message of the story remains the same: Snow White representing the triumph of good over evil. Two lessons can be drawn from this play: "Don’t irritate yourself
against those who commit evil deeds, for they are burnt like dry grass" and "Don't let yourself be moved by vanity, selfishness, and pride, or 'you will live out your time in loneliness and regret.'"

Kelly, in writing this play, has used a simple but clear method of exposition which is very appropriate for the understanding of the children's audience; however, the characters could be more multi-dimensional and the dialogue more original. This script would perform well for lower grades or for a touring company as the sets are very simple.

—Kazadi Big Musungayi

### The Empty Chair

Kelly, Tim. *The Empty Chair.*


*The Empty Chair* should have been a scene in a potentially powerful long play about drug addiction and its consequences. As it stands now, it is only a vignette with no inciting moment, build, or climax. The story is about teenage substance abusers told from the viewpoint of a fellow youthful abuser who has died from an overdose. Each teenager gives his opinion to the group under the guidance of the group leader. The play is more of a series of monologues and there is no real conflict between the actors. The characters may be played by either male or females.

This play could be performed as an introduction to a lecture or debate on drug addiction and child abuse, and would be very effective for junior high or high school students. It could then lead to a discussion concerning the fate of addicted people and their place in society, as well as society's responsibility to substance abusers. It would also be good for classroom use.

—Kazadi Big Musungayi and Gayanne Ramsden

### The Terrible Vizir of Vaduz


*The Terrible Vizir of Vaduz* is a fantasy play centered around Maggie, her best friend, Dicky, and her cow, Fern. The night before the big 4-H dairy cow contest, Maggie dreams of winning and traveling around the world with Dicky and Fern. Finding themselves stranded in Vaduz, a strange town that outlaws cows and from which children disappear, Maggie and Dicky rally to the rescue, managing to save Fern and find the
missing children. After a night of adventure, both children awaken to discover that perhaps the dream had been very real after all.

_The Terrible Vizir of Vaduz_ is a well-written, high-paced show. Junior high students through adults would enjoy performing this play for elementary children because of the fun dialogue and settings. The play begins in the mountains of Tennessee and the transition from reality to the dream sequence is one of the best parts of the show. Children mime actions in the dark while narrating events that transport us from Tennessee to Vaduz. The play’s cast of 24, and the lighting and set demand would not make this a good touring show; however, as a large show, _The Terrible Vizir of Vaduz_ is recommended for production by junior high and older elementary-age children.

—Kelli Jo Kelly

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